

and sweet voices of European women, and  
lights and  
warm welcomes.

*Bitlis, November 12.*—This is the most  
romantically-  
situated city that I have seen in Western Asia.  
The dreamy  
impressions of height and depth received on  
the night of  
my arrival were more than realised the  
following morning.  
Even to the traveller arriving by daylight  
Bitlis must  
come as a great surprise, for it is situated in a  
hole upon  
which the upper valley descends with a  
sudden dip.  
The Bitlis-chai or Eastern Tigris passes  
through it in a  
series of raging cataracts, and is joined in  
the middle of  
the town by another torrent tumbling down  
another wild  
valley, and from this meeting of the waters  
massive stone  
houses rise one above another, singly, and in  
groups and  
terraces, producing a singularly striking  
effect. Five  
valleys appear to unite in Bitlis and to  
radiate from  
a lofty platform of rock supported on  
precipices, the  
irregular outlines of which are emphasised by  
walls and  
massive square and circular towers, the  
gigantic ruins  
of Bitlis Castle.

The massiveness of the houses is  
remarkable, and  
their courtyards and gardens are enclosed  
by strong  
walls. Every gate is strengthened and  
studded with  
iron, every window is heavily barred, all are at  
a considerable  
height, and every house looks as if it  
could stand  
a siege. There is no room to spare; the  
dwellings are  
piled tier above tier, and the flagged  
footways in front  
of them hang on the edges of precipices.

Twenty  
picturesque stone bridges, each one of a  
single arch,  
span the Tigris and the torrents which  
unite with it.  
There are ancient ruins scattered  
through the town,  
It claims immense antiquity, and its  
inhabitants ascribe  
its castle and some of its bridges to  
Alexander the Great,  
but antiquarians attribute the former  
either to the  
Saracens or to the days when an ancient  
Armenian city